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THE
NATIONAL PREACHER.

Go....Teach all Nations....Matt. xxviii. 19.

No. 10.

NEW-YORK, MARCH, 1829.

VOL. III.

SERMONS LIV. LV. & LVI.

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BOSTON.

THE GOSPEL THE ONLY SECURITY FOR EMINENT AND ABIDING NATIONAL PROSPERITY.

JEREMIAH, ix. 23, 24.—*Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches : But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth : for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.*

At the time this inspired admonition was given, the Jewish nation had become uncommonly wicked. Instead of relying on the favor of Heaven, they confided in their knowledge, wealth, power, and political wisdom. Their prophets warned them of the divine displeasure and of approaching judgments, but these warnings passed unheeded as the idle wind. What, said they, has a nation, so wise and powerful, to fear ? Let the prophets mind their trade, and take care of the world to come, and we will take care of this ; for religion and politics have no sort of connection.

To rebuke such impiety the text was spoken. " Thus saith the **LORD.**" It is no philosopher that speaks ; but God. No doubtful theory is announced ; but eternal truth. No vain experiment is recommended ; but the wisdom which is from above. " Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches : But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth : for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." Cease from your vain confidence in learning, wealth, and power, and put your trust in that knowledge of my character and government, which shall purify the heart and secure my protection and blessing.

The same propensity to confide in man for national prosperity, and to forget God and the influence of his government, has manifested itself in every age. And no nation was ever, by its location, government, and great prosperity, more tempted to do this than ours. Our territory is vast, our soil bountiful, our institutions free, our intellect unshackled, our physical power vigorous, our enterprise untiring, our numbers multiplying beyond example, our fleets and armies are skilful and brave, while our colleges and schools are

multiplying, and our attainments in science and the arts fast coming into honorable competition with the first nations of Europe. Indeed we possess the elements of the most powerful nation that ever lived, with ample room to grow, and nurture to sustain. Our relative condition is also sublimely interesting. We are surrounded by the ruins and the shaking of other nations, who have gloried in themselves and not in God,—whose monitory exhortations come to us across the deep, that we trust not in man, but in the living God. The text inculcates the doctrine,

THAT THE MORAL INFLUENCE OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT IS INDISPENSABLE TO EMINENT AND ABIDING NATIONAL PROSPERITY.

In the illustration of this doctrine we propose to consider,

- I. *The inefficacy of some of the common grounds of confidence ; and,*
- II. *The certain efficacy of the Gospel to secure eminent and abiding national prosperity.*

1. The cultivation of intellect has been relied on. Theorists have said, that knowledge and virtue are the foundation and security of republican institutions ; but they have taken it for granted, that knowledge and virtue are inseparable. Hence, throughout our land, a great enthusiasm for learning has gone forth ; and legislators, and philosophers, and poets, have vied with each other in praise of schools and literary institutions. And truly they are means without which no nation can be free and happy. But, for purposes of restraint and reformation, mere knowledge is nugatory. There are no moral qualities in intellect ; nor is there in science any moral power to govern or purify the heart—the source of all the evils which afflict humanity, and which hitherto have baffled all human efforts. Those countries and ages which have been most distinguished for science and the fine arts, have also been distinguished for voluptuousness and crime ; thus evincing that the era of moral dissolution may tread hard upon that of the highest intellectual culture. This indeed does not prove that knowledge corrupts ; but it demonstrates its impotency to purify, amid the powerful temptations which attend the ascent to national greatness.

2. Reason, upon which, from age to age, the hopes of so many have hung, has given equal evidence of its impotency to unite moral purity with national prosperity. It has never been able to develope the character of God, or the precepts and sanctions of his moral government, nor to preserve even the knowledge of a revelation, or repel the invasion of idolatry, and imposture, and superstition. What can reason accomplish, now, towards dispelling the darkness which for ages has rested on three fourths of the human family ? It is, compared with the moral illumination of the Gospel, the effort of a rush-light to compete with the orb of day in scattering the darkness which enshrouds the earth. The efforts and failures of reason to elevate nations to permanent prosperity had been protracted through four thousand years, when, “ after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”

3. Alike impotent have been the efforts of philosophy to reform mankind.

The philosophers did not reform even themselves. "Do you think," says Cicero, "that those precepts of morality had any influence, except in a very few instances, upon the men who speculated, wrote, and disputed concerning them? No: who is there of all the philosophers whose mind and manners were conformed to the dictates of right reason? Who of them ever made his philosophy the law and rule of his life, and not merely an occasion of displaying his own ingenuity? On the contrary, many of them have been slaves to the vilest lusts." The boasted illumination of their philosophy extended only to a favored few of the wealthiest in society; while for the mass of mankind it had no instruction, formed no plans, indulged no hopes, expressed no desires.

Socrates, according to Plato, says, "You may resign all hope of reforming the manners of men, unless it please God to send some person to instruct you." And Plato himself says, "Whatever is set right in the present ill state of the world, can be done only by the interposition of God."

The testimony of such men is unanswerable. We are surrounded by the effects of Christianity; but they felt the midnight in which they were enveloped, and the impotency of mere human efforts to restrain the depravity of man. The middle and lower classes of society were out of the question, until the Gospel brought its glad tidings to the poor, and originated institutions for the efficacious instruction of the world.

4. Again, national wealth has been regarded as the perfection of prosperity. But, instead of being able to give perpetuity to the golden harvest, it has, in all ages, been the most active and powerful cause of national corruption and ruin. The power of voluntary self-denial is not equal to the temptation of an all-surrounding abundance; and no instance has yet occurred, in which national voluptuousness has not trod hard upon the footsteps of national opulence, destroying moral principle and patriotism, debasing the mind and enervating the body, and preparing men to become, like the descendants of the Romans, effeminate slaves. All which is done to stimulate agriculture, commerce, and the arts, is, therefore, without some self-preserving moral power, but providing fuel for the fire which is destined to consume us. The greater our prosperity the shorter its duration, and the more tremendous our downfall, unless the moral power of the Gospel shall be exerted to arrest those causes which have destroyed other nations.

5. Nor is military power at all a safer ground of confidence than wealth. It is at best, in this world of wrong and violence, but a necessary evil. An evil, too, of awful magnitude in its influence upon national morality; and an engine which may as easily be applied, and has as often been applied, to overthrow, as to defend the liberties of mankind.

But were the resources of knowledge, wealth, and power, even more efficacious, an hundred fold, than experience permits us to believe, still they could not shield us against the retributions of that government which God administers over nations, according to their deeds. What can the most powerful nations do to avert the just judgments of the Almighty? Where are the nations of antiquity?—Gone—dashed in pieces as a potter's vessel. The walls of Babylon—the treasures of Egypt—the might of Alexander—were no defence. Once the Pope could wield a force equal to that of ancient Rome. Did he but stamp his foot, all Europe awoke, and rushed to arms. He held the world in vassalage. He sat as god in the temple of God. But the

arm of his power is now palsied : and, shorn of his locks, he is comparatively weak as another man.

The military despotism of France threatened once the liberties of the world. If ever there was a mighty man who might glory in his might, it was Bonaparte, when he drove upon Russia the most powerful force ever wielded by one man. But Russia, sustained by her armies and her climate, stood, while the stars in their courses fought against the invader.

6. Political wisdom, the boast and confidence of nations, is on many accounts unavailing to secure and perpetuate national prosperity. It aims only at secular results and not at moral purity, and must ever be attended with great uncertainty in regard to the effect of measures on the innumerable multitudes of minds that are to be influenced. So that political science, so called, is often but a series of ingenious conjectures. The younger Pitt formed two gigantic coalitions to check the power of Bonaparte, both of which were dashed, and ended in its augmentation. The dependance of great events on trivial circumstances which no human foresight can perceive, renders, often, the wisest plans abortive : while the agency of God in the government of the world may in a moment baffle and turn to foolishness the best-concerted schemes of man. Haman planned wisely for the destruction of Mordecai ; but the hand of God brought the mischief intended for another upon his own head. The brethren of Joseph planned wisely to prevent the accomplishment of his dreams; while, in the hand of God, the very things they did to hinder, secured their accomplishment.

The dominion of the passions, also, over reason and judgment, renders human foresight and policy a matter of uncertainty. Wisdom is no certain guarantee against passion. Nothing is more common than for a sudden **gust of anger** to shipwreck every hope of the most judicious calculation. Those whom God would destroy, he can give up to infatuation :—a state of mind in which passion guides the helm, and swells the sail, and drives furiously to destruction. Nations, like volcanoes, possess within themselves the materials of ruin : and for God to take off his hand, and give them up, is certain destruction. These, however, are dangers incident chiefly to the connection of nations with each other, or to times of revolution and civil commotion. But even in seasons of tranquillity, there are evils in every community, which no human laws or municipal regulations can control. Laws cannot compel benevolent dispositions, or purify motives, or repress selfishness, or ambition, or avarice, or envy, or pride, or voluptuousness. They are restricted to the government of actions—and of these, to such only as can be commanded and enforced, or forbidden and punished—constituting but a small portion of the good or evil on which the prosperity or destruction of social enjoyment depends. And in the event of transgression, such actions only can be punished as are capable of proof. The law has no omniscient eye to detect, no almighty hand to arrest and punish transgression. Nothing but the government of God—its laws—its sanctions—its dispositions—and its universal and infallible administration—is adequate to the emergencies of this sin-destroyed world. The malady is in the heart; and nothing human can expel, or subdue, or stand before its power. Throw obstructions in its course, and its impatient floods accumulate, and press upon their barriers, till they undermine, or overwhelm, and sweep them away. Bind with green withs or new cords the giant depravity of man, and they are sundered as flax touched by the fire. Try by amuse-

ment to divert the monster from his work of death, and you do but fill the cup of oblivion to all that is good, and raise in the house of mirth the syren song that allures but to destroy. Set in array, as Papal and Pagan lawgivers have done, the terrors of superstition, and, in the despotism which follows, you form a beast of seven heads and ten horns, whose infernal wisdom has amplified all antecedent modes of debasing and tormenting mankind. And if, to expel from the earth this anomaly of mischief, you send out a crusade of atheists and infidels, experience has evinced that their reign of terror so much surpasses other forms of wickedness and modes of torment, as to render popery and a military despotism comparative blessings. God, my hearers, the omniscient, the almighty God, can alone administer an efficacious moral government over nations—and he only by that Gospel which is “glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good-will to men.”

We are now to show,

H. That the Gospel is able to conduct nations to eminent and abiding prosperity.

It was devised and bestowed upon mankind for this purpose—containing in its ample provisions the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come: and it is, in all its moral tendencies, eminently adapted to the ends for which it was designed.

It addresses powerfully the most efficient springs of human action—hope and fear—the desire of good and the dread of evil. The rigor of law would exasperate and drive to desperation a world of sinners; while the Gospel—with the sword of justice and the sceptre of mercy—enters the world to preach deliverance to the captives, and to set at liberty them that are bound. It throws upon the hopes and fears of men an intensity of motive, in the mingled and balanced influence of justice and mercy, severity and kindness, affording the highest moral excitement which can possibly be applied to the human mind. The glories of heaven allure, and the terrors of the Lord alarm. The terms of pardon—filial sorrow for sin and affectionate reliance on Christ—preclude despondency and elevate hope; while all the spirit-stirring truths of the Gospel are secured from oblivion, and made permanent and plain in a written revelation—capable of translation into every language of man, and containing, in its ample provisions, an institution for the religious instruction of mankind, simple, cheap, and efficacious—reconciling the religious education of the world with the avocations of labor, by setting apart one day in seven for that end, and an order of men who shall be exclusively devoted to the work; securing in this way the continuance and repetition of that instruction upon which the moral purity of the world so eminently depends, and by which the Holy Spirit operates to restrain, to convince of sin, and to reconcile an alienated world to God.

The Scriptures confirm the views we have given of the adaptation and power of the Gospel to reclaim and bless mankind. It is described as the power of God and the wisdom of God; as the highest possible exhibition of his goodness—the riches of the goodness of God—the brightness of his glory—as the exhibition of all the power of motive which is possible—rendering, when the Gospel fails, reformation hopeless.

Already has the Gospel given good evidence of its power, and an earnest of its future achievements. No other moral cause has made so great and

so benign an impression upon this dark and miserable world. Commencing in the ministry of a single individual, and sustained by the enterprise of twelve disciples, it urged its silent career, amid flames, and tortures, and death, until, at the close of the third century, it triumphed.

The effect produced upon the laws and institutions of the Roman empire by Christianity is the greatest which was ever effected without violence. Partial as was the spread of Christianity—imperfect as was the knowledge of it—and limited as was its efficacy upon the heart—and transient as was its lustre—so soon eclipsed by superstition and the return of barbarian ignorance, yet, to this day, is the difference great and manifest between the worst portions of Christendom and the total darkness that rests on all the earth beside. The hideous spectacles of Pagan impurity and cruelty have given place to monuments of Christian love. And if this partial, momentary experiment produced such changes, what may not be expected when the religion of the Gospel shall pervade every palace, and cottage, and heart on the globe?

We have another evidence of the life-giving power of the Gospel at the Reformation. Gradually it had been sequestered, until, under the abused name of Christianity, a system of idolatry had been reared up, as impure almost and as fierce and cruel as Paganism itself. But no sooner did the Bible reappear, in the translations made and scattered by the reformers, and the system of evangelical instruction, so long suspended, go into operation, than half Europe burst her chains, and experienced a moral resurrection.

Other instances are now multiplying upon us of the civilizing and purifying power of the Gospel, among heathen nations, and those too the most debased. In South Africa, among the Hottentots, the purities and charities of civilized life are rising up under evangelical culture. At Sierra Leone, also, orderly, decent, and happy settlements are formed, and churches too are established, giving evidence of elevated piety—composed of beings rescued a few years since from the chains, and darkness, and moral corruption of slave-ships.

The change at the Sandwich Islands, also, is as unquestionable as it is wonderful and joyful. A nation has been born in a day. A reverse of secular and moral condition has been achieved, greater, and more entire and benign, on the whole population, than was ever before witnessed on earth in so short a time.

But we need not go abroad for monuments of the benign influence of the Gospel upon the temporal condition of man. Our pilgrim fathers came hither that they might enjoy religious liberty, and make a fair experiment of what the Gospel could do to bless mankind. And the religious, civil, and social prosperity of New England is the result. The poor we have ever with us—but among them who are the *virtuous* poor? Precisely those who venerate the Sabbath, and attend stately upon the worship of God. While the *vicious* poor will be found, among those whose religious education has been neglected, and upon whom the Bible, and the Sabbath, and the Gospel have exerted little influence: and if you traverse the whole land, those portions most distinguished for Bibles and a devout attention upon Gospel ordinances, will be found proportionably distinguished by whatsoever things are pure, and lovely, and of good report.

The reforming influence of the Gospel, as developed in Sabbath Schools, also gives triumphant testimony to its power. The Recorder of London stated, at a public meeting, that of two thousand children educated in Sa-

bath Schools, only seven who had been in them over fourteen days had ever been brought before him for crime ; and that too among a class of citizens peculiarly degraded.

These fruits of the Bible are in perfect accordance with its predictions. I need not repeat them at large. They are many and express. It is predicted that God will destroy the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil spread over all nations—that his knowledge shall cover the earth as the waters the sea—that all shall know him from the greatest to the least—and the people be all righteous—that wars shall cease—that benevolence shall supplant selfishness and ferocity—and that the earth, exuberant in its supplies, shall nevertheless be filled with purity and joy.

I have only to add, that all other systems of moral influence depend simply upon their own unaided strength; while the Gospel is attended by the special presence of God and the power of his Holy Spirit—giving to it an efficacy infinitely beyond that of simple argument or eloquence. Thus attended, the Gospel wrought its wonders of mercy on the day of Pentecost, and during the first ages of Christianity. Thus attended, it has, in these latter days and these ends of the earth, often, in the course of a few weeks or months, changed the entire aspect of a neighborhood or town—introducing a moral elevation that gladdens angels. And thus attended, this same Gospel is capable of breaking every chain of oppression, and renovating a ruined world. Who then, that loves his country—that loves mankind—would, by example or otherwise, hinder the progress of this Gospel ? and not rejoice rather in every effort made for extending its blessed influence ?

SERMON LV.

PROPRIETY AND IMPORTANCE OF EFFORTS TO EVANGELIZE THE NATION.

JEREMIAH, ix. 23, 24.

If, as has been shown in the preceding discourse, the Gospel only is able to conduct nations to abiding prosperity,—then,

NOTHING IS TO BE FEARED, BUT MUCH IS TO BE HOPED FOR, FROM THE EFFORTS OF PATRIOTS AND CHRISTIANS TO EVANGELIZE THE NATION.

Infidels and profligate men affect great trepidation, lest the efforts made to spread the Gospel should lead to combinations dangerous to our liberties, and rear up another hierarchy, and bring back priesthood and the dark ages. But do they *really believe* any such thing ? Do they fear any such thing ? Do they not *know*, that wherever the Gospel and its institutions have been most revered, men have been most intelligent, most free from superstition, and most incapable of ecclesiastical domination ? Do they not *know*, that superstition and priesthood have in all climes and ages increased, just in proportion as the moral energy of the Gospel has declined ? It is the testimony of history, that principles of civil and religious liberty have always accompanied evangelical religion, and made their most desperate resistance to arbitrary power and achieved their most glorious victories under its auspices. And it is equally true, that there never was a religion

but that of the Gospel, which did not darken and debase the mind, and lend its influence to despotism and to a corrupt and abominable priesthood.

The ascendancy of that terrible form of *nominal* Christianity, which arose in the dark ages, and whose persecutions have kept the heavens gleaming with their fires, and the earth flowing with blood, was the result of a long declension of evangelical light, and has held, and still holds, indissoluble alliance with ignorance of the pure Gospel, and passive obedience to despotic power.

But are those among us, who affect so much apprehension of danger from clerical influence, aware of the invidious imputation which they thus cast upon their countrymen? Are they as ignorant as the people of the dark ages? Do they need conservators to prevent their giving up their money, and their civil and religious rights, into the hands of the clergy? Are our citizens so far gone, that they have no guardians between them and destruction, but the volunteer aid of those keen-sighted, kind-hearted gentlemen, who have discovered that the Bible is a cunningly devised fable, and that after death it shall be as well with the wicked as with the righteous? What possible danger to liberty can arise from clerical influence, exerted by enlightened men upon a virtuous community? There is an influence inseparable from talent, piety, and fidelity in the pastoral office, which none but wicked men fear, and which can never be prevented, but by such general ignorance and profligacy as will render good men odious, and ruin the nation. A new kind of conspiracy, indeed, against civil liberty must that be, which proposes, by the dissemination of Bibles, and the preaching of the Gospel, to enslave the country!—The very means by which the Reformers emancipated half Europe, and by which to this day all the civil liberty which exists in the world has been preserved! An unparalleled deliverance, too, from priestcraft and popery must that be, which shall be achieved by undermining the public confidence in evangelical ministers, stopping the circulation of Bibles and tracts, and abolishing missionary societies and sabbath schools!—thus leaving the land in darkness, and open to the invasion of Papal missionaries, and the influence of those ample revenues which “his Holiness” so unsparingly consecrates to the establishment of his dominion in North America.*

Are those enemies of revelation who clamour so loudly against the means which achieved the reformation, and which alone can prevent the spread of popery in our country, in the pay of his Holiness? Has the secret service-money reached its destination, and does the mystery of iniquity already begin to work? We make no pretensions to prophecy, and we do not need that gift to foresee, that if Popery shall ever gain in this land an ascendancy dangerous to our liberties, it will be accomplished only through the aid of infidels, and the virulent haters of evangelical religion, and those multitudes to whom evangelical instruction is not extended.

Already has the loud tone of execration against popery been turned from “his Holiness” and his American emissaries, to that class of Protestants who in Europe broke down his dominion, and in this country are raising the only effectual barriers against his usurpation.

Is it darkness, then, or is it light, which they so much fear, who cry out against charities which are destined to evangelize the nation and the world?

* It is understood that “his Holiness” has sent over at least *twenty-seven* Missionaries, and *one hundred thousand* dollars to aid in this good work the past year.

Have *they* any objection to the dark ages who oppose the propagation of that Gospel—the extinction of which produced them, and the restoration of which has kindled the only light and restored the only civil and religious liberty which now cheers the world? Do not the infidel and profligate know, that the general prevalence of the Gospel would create an atmosphere of light and purity that would pour shame on the *wicked*? And is not *this* the *real* ground of their alarm?

But our countrymen are too intelligent to be the dupes of a feigned alarm. They understand the motives of those who make the outcry—in many instances men who for a mess of pottage would sell their country—men who, should a tyrant ever rule the nation, will, by their bad example, prepare the way, and be the first to hail the usurper, and to become the ministers of his despotism. For, those who blush not to practise treason against the government of God—who acknowledge the obligation of Divine institutions only to insult Heaven and a Christian community by violating them, have no conscience and no patriotism, and can give no security that they would not, in times of temptation, sell their country.

But will the future Cæsar of our country, should one arise, be able, think you, to call to his standard the patriotic band, who, amid obloquy and self-denial, are laboring to transmit to future millions our colleges and schools, and sabbaths and sanctuaries? Were such means and such men ever employed to subvert the liberties of a nation? Preposterous! The Gospel, instead of degrading, is the only power which elevates the people above the influence of demagogues, and diffuses intelligence, independence, and a vigorous morality among the middle classes in society. It is the only power which detects imposture, supplants idolatry, and pours a hated day-light on superstition and the works of darkness. It is the only power which can keep down the plethora of a luxuriant prosperity, and restrain the paroxysms of mad ambition.

As to the outcry, then, if sincere, of a national religion, to be reared by clerical intrigue and pecuniary influence, it is the most chimerical and laughable imagination that ever danced in the brain of a lunatic. The permanent funds held by charitable institutions are but a drop of the bucket, compared with those which are allowed to be held by companies associated for secular purposes, and their annual accounts, rendered to the public, of receipts and expenditures, are more minute, and such as more entirely preclude the possibility of perversion, than those rendered by any secular institutions in the land. No man who pays taxes for the support of government, has any thing like the same evidence that the public income is not perverted. And it is this open, honest course, which satisfies a virtuous community, whose charities will no longer be continued than this confidence in their wise appropriation is sustained.

The Christian population of the United States is divided chiefly between four or five large denominations; each sustained and protected by its own religious Magazines, Newspapers, Theological Seminaries, Education and Missionary Societies, and Sabbath Schools—neither of which could supplant the others, or be supplanted, without a moral miracle. Nor could they be amalgamated into one denomination for ambitious purposes, without a still greater miracle. And though, in regard to objects in which all Christians and all patriots are agreed, it may be amiable, and very proper, that these denominations should cheerfully unite and co-operate, yet their amalgamation into one denomination, even for religious purposes,

would not indeed be desirable. In their emulation they banish sloth and covetousness, and provoke one another to love and good works; and thus with increased zeal they put forth those efforts which are needed to evangelize the land. The funds raised by them for charitable and religious purposes are under the management of boards of trust, composed of ministers of approved character, and laymen possessing the highest confidence of the denominations to which they belong, and of the candid and virtuous of every name.

Instead of threatening the liberties of our country, then, if our liberties are to be preserved, it is eminently by the instrumentality of such associations that the work must be done. Government cannot superintend the religious and moral interests of the country. And the churches, though adequate to the purposes of a stated ministry, are not, as such, sufficiently imbued with zeal and harmony of character to act, as churches, with the activity and vigor demanded for the general diffusion of the Gospel. But these volunteer associations concentrate the best hearts, the most willing hands, and the most vigorous and untiring enterprise. And being united by affinities of character, they move with less impediment and more vigor than any other bodies can move, and constitute, no doubt, that form of the sacramental host by which Jesus Christ intends to give freedom to the world.

So far from being dangerous to our liberties, these benevolent associations constitute just that kind of attraction which our circumstances demand. Our national compact is a compromise of local interests, exposing us to sectional jealousies and competitions, as well as to the feverish agitations of passion and ambition. Religion is the only principle of universal benevolence, whose eye pervades, and whose heart feels for the entire nation. And Christians are those members of the nation whose views and hearts are most in unison, and who act for ends, and under the influence of principles, which constitute the cement by which the nation may be held together.

It is by means of these associations, to spread the Bible and distribute Tracts, and educate ministers, and establish schools universally, that Christian friendships are formed, and a national influence exerted, and that charity extended which is the bond of perfectness, and which, if any thing can do it, will save the nation from civil war and commotion. And should we be ever driven by mad ambition to the perilous edge of destruction, it will be found, that the love of Christians for one another, and for the cause of God and their country, will afford a powerful tranquilizing influence, and will probably be the cause without which the nation had not been saved.

A peculiar motive to effort now, is found in the consideration that we are fast becoming a *manufacturing*, as well as an agricultural people, and, with the increase of temptation, need that augmented preserving influence of the Gospel, which experience has shown to be able to avert the evils which have attended the manufacturing establishments of Europe, and to render this class of citizens as intelligent, industrious, respectable, and pious, as any whose labors bless the land.

Indeed our Republic is becoming too prosperous, too powerful, too extended, too numerous, to be governed by any power without the blessed influence of the Gospel. The bayonet, in despotic governments, may for a time be a substitute; but ours must be self-government, or anarchy first, and then despotism. The prevalence of Christian philosophy may save us, as certainly as that of infidel philosophy would be our ruin.

If, then, wisdom, and power, and wealth, are not able, and the Gospel is able, to secure abiding national prosperity, why should we, with pertinacious obstinacy, rely upon causes whose impotency to preserve has been demonstrated by the experience of ages? And why that slowness of heart to rely on a cause, whose efficacy has been most happy every where, and uniformly, just in proportion as it has been fairly and faithfully tried? Whence that idolatry of patriotism, and talent, and forms of government, and that continual jealousy of the Gospel and its institutions and ministers, when it brings to the disordered state the only remedy which can prevent dissolution? And why should we tremble with forebodings of evil to our beloved country, when we possess the infallible means of rendering her prosperity durable as the luminaries of heaven, and abundant as the waves of the sea? And why should our time be spent, and our efforts comparatively wasted, in a partial and dilatory application of these means, instead of an immediate and universal effort? The Bible and the sacred Sabbath in every family of the land, would be the salt of the nation and the light of the world. The experiment is eminently practicable, and the result is certain; and why should the work of self-preserving mercy linger? Why should not the whole nation awake to its real danger, and make full proof of the power of the Gospel to save—not by governmental aid—but by the voluntary efforts of philosophers, and statesmen, and patriots, and Christians? Why trim the poisonous upas, when the axe may be laid at its root, and its circumference of desolation be filled with trees of righteousness? Why tamper with diseases of which so many nations have died, when the mercy of Heaven has provided One Tree, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations?

SERMON LVI.

PRE-EMINENT IMPORTANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.¹

JEREMIAH, ix. 23, 24.

FROM the efficacy of the Gospel to perpetuate national prosperity, as illustrated in the foregoing discourses, we learn,

THE PRE-EMINENT IMPORTANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

The moral Government of God has no influence upon communities, except as its precepts and sanctions are clearly and habitually presented to the mind. But to this the Sabbath is indispensable. No efficacious mode of general religious instruction was ever devised, but that which by divine appointment is associated with the Sabbath. Throughout the world, where no Sabbath convenes the population to receive instruction, the character and government of God and the retributions of eternity fade from the mind, and cease to operate as principles of action. Blot out the Sabbath, and in half a century, the intelligent worship of God would be nearly obliterated, and the land covered with every form of superstition and crime.

The Sabbath is the great organ of the divine administration. It is the sun of the moral world. The mainspring of moral action. Where the Sabbath does not give presence and energy to the divine government, the moral law

is without effect; parents are without natural affection; children are disobedient and dissolute; and the family a scene of turmoil and wretchedness.

In those countries where Christianity is but a name, and the Sabbath a holiday, assassination and murder are committed with terrific frequency. And in our own land, these crimes are most frequent where the sacredness of the Sabbath is most violated, and where intemperance and profaneness legislate, instead of a public sentiment, formed by the benevolence of the Gospel. Even that command of the decalogue which organizes the family, and watches over domestic purity, and perpetuates all the sweet charities which render life a blessing, maintains its powers only by the energy of the fourth command. And the security of property and the efficacy of oaths correspond entirely with the universal dominion, or partial efficacy, which the Sabbath gives to the moral government of God.

These are the considerations which have awakened the solicitude of the nation, and called forth petitions to the government from all parts of the Union for a *repeal of all legislative requirement or sanction of the violation of this Holy Day.* For, however seemingly great the convenience or profit of a Sabbath mail may be, it is purchased at the expense of moral principle—the life-blood of the nation.

The importunity is now the greater, because it is fully evident, that no successful effort can be made to resist the floods of worldliness and pleasure which are rolling over the Sabbath, while they are sustained and led on by the omnipresent example of government—under the high sanction and command of *national law.* The numbers whom the carrying and opening of the mail diverts directly from the influence of the Sanctuary, and the greater numbers of those who accompany them, or minister to their necessities, together with the innumerable multitudes, especially in large towns, whose worldly interests and cares and labors are continued by the news and letters poured in upon the Sabbath, must, when reckoned up, be seen to subtract, in an alarming degree, from those energies of the divine government which depend on the weekly ministrations of truth. But if to these we add all who are, perhaps, first tempted to travel in steam-boats and stages, by the *national example*; and all who, when the flood-gates are thus open, pour out for business or pleasure, on foot, on horseback, in chaises, coaches, waggons and canal-boats; who that reflects, can but tremble for the consequences? Who does not see that the numbers employed in undermining our holiest institutions, are becoming greater than those employed for their defence?

Were it not for this example of the government, a public sentiment might be formed, which would silently and powerfully correct the evil, and preserve to the nation the benign influence of the Sabbath. But with the strong tide of governmental influence setting down upon us, it will be certainly difficult, if not impossible, to prevent a general prostration of the Sacred Day:—at least as to any efficacious purposes of national instruction and morality. For its influence upon public morals can be salutary, only so far as it acts through the medium of evangelical instruction.

The question, therefore, whether the government will or will not continue to require its eight thousand Post-Masters, and several thousand other agents to violate the Lord's Day, is perhaps the most important that ever was, or ever will be submitted for national consideration. Prospectively, it is the question of the preservation or abolition of the Sabbath, and every petitioner,

and legislator, and remonstrant, should make up his mind on the simple question, **SHALL WE ABOLISH, OR NOT ABOLISH, THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH?**

With but twelve millions of people, and no hindrance on the part of government, it might perhaps be practicable to form a public sentiment that would set bounds to the encroachments on the Sabbath, but every year and hour the breach becomes wider, and should the flood roll on, encouraged by government, till, within the present century, our numbers shall amount to **EIGHTY MILLIONS**—more and more tempted, and more and more by habit and the course of business necessitated, as they will feel, to violate the Sabbath—whose voice will then be able to electrify the nation? whose hand can stop the rolling of such a flood? or whose wisdom can counteract its awful desolations?

A spectacle, then, we now witness, such as the sun never before shone upon. A Christian people petitioning their government to repeal a statute which enjoins upon many thousands of our citizens a direct violation of the Holy Sabbath, and which, by the high authority of its example, encourages many thousands more to similar violations; and that government hesitating, whether to grant or reject these petitions!

It does not belong to the ministry, as such, to legislate. But it does belong to our profession, as a class of men appointed of Heaven for that very purpose, to lift up our voice, in respectful but earnest expostulation and argument, against every form of national transgression. And could I approach the representatives of the freest nation upon earth, and possessing ample means of becoming the greatest and the happiest, I would beseech them to consider, whether it was ever possible for a people to delegate to its representatives the power to appropriate the Sabbath to a secular use? Has an individual a right to secularize the Sabbath for his own convenience or profit? The laws of God and man forbid him. How then can the people delegate to Congress a right which no one possesses in his own person?

The Sabbath was indeed made for man; but not to add to the curse which doomed him, six days in seven, to eat bread in the sweat of his face; but to alleviate its pressure, and to bring around him the means by which God in his mercy may allay the curse, and bring him out of bondage into glorious liberty.

But were it possible for a people to delegate to their government the right to secularize the Sabbath, I would still ask, whether the generation who fought the battles of our Independence and framed our Constitution, did in fact delegate the power to appropriate the Sabbath to purposes of national gain? They who recognised the over-ruled providence of God, and national accountability, and, beyond any other people on earth, venerated the holy Sabbath—they who, in their distress, so often cried unto the God of armies, and for victory sent up such heart-felt thanksgivings—they, surely, while the tears of distress and of joy were yet wet upon their cheeks, could not, *did not*, in their national compact, authorize the violation of the Sabbath. A clause authorising what is now done, could not have passed the Convention: and if it had, would, at that day, have been rejected unanimously by the States. Besides, rights not expressly delegated to Congress are reserved to the States. But the Constitution not only gives to Congress no power to divert the Sabbath to secular uses, but the laws of nearly every State in the Union expressly prohibit to its citizens any such appropriation of the Sabbath. How then can Congress authorise by law encroachments on the Sabbath, without invading directly the reserved rights of the States? Cases of national, as of in-

dividual necessity, may occur, but they are plain and exempt cases when they exist, and can never justify laws requiring a habitual violation of the Sabbath.

But were it a question not of morality, or of national right, but of expediency—the *impolicy* of encroaching upon the religious veneration and careful observance of the Sabbath, would be a decisive reason for regarding the cry of patriots and Christians, resounding in the ear of government. I am aware that the convenience and gain are by some supposed to be so great as to make the transportation and opening of the mail on the Sabbath a work of *necessity*. But how can that be a work of necessity, which in London, the commercial emporium of the world, is not done? In that great city, the post-office is not opened on the Sabbath, and no mail leaves it.—Are our citizens in such straitened circumstances as to make it *necessary* to attend to business here one day in seven more than in London?

There are multitudes in our cities, God grant their number may increase, who do not call for their letters on the Sabbath. Do they fail in business? or do they fall behind their commercial competitors who include the Sabbath in their day of secular care? The plea of necessity is utterly unfounded;—the result of that impatient worldliness which needs to be checked;—which it was the merciful design of the Sabbath to suspend; and which, if it be not suspended, will drown the nation in perdition.

The plea of necessity can never hold, till the nation is threatened with poverty;—certainly not while it is in a condition of unparalleled affluence. It is over-abundance which constitutes the temptation to violate the Sabbath;—an argument which, if valid, would license every thriving mechanic and farmer to do the same, as a matter of personal convenience, and necessity. But already over-prosperity is our greatest danger, unless we can balance its corrupting tendencies by moral power. To subtract, therefore, from the moral influence of the Sabbath, for the purpose of adding to our abundance, is like subtracting the life-blood from one who is dying of debility, to be forced into the veins of another who is dying of inflammation. All our Sabbath-day earnings, then, were they real, would but increase our malady, and at the same time diminish the force of our only remedy.

But long since has the point been settled that nothing is gained by adding the seventh to the six days of labor. Mind and body have their limits of care and toil; and God, who made them, well knows what degree of relaxation is consistent with their most productive exercise, and has given his decision in the appropriation of six days to labor and one for rest; and none have been able with impunity to disregard this appointment. The appointment, in France, of nine, instead of six days for labor, was found to be injurious to health and vigorous enterprise. And those best acquainted with the animal powers, admit, that whatever immediate gain may be attained by unintermittent toil, is cut off, and more than balanced by the waning powers and shortened date of animal activity. And the same laws of nature, with irresistible power, will bring the man prematurely to the dust, who disregards Heaven's merciful appointment of a seventh day rest. So far then as national prosperity depends on mental and muscular vigor in man, and the unwasted powers of animal life, six days produce a greater amount of income than seven,—and this accompanied with cheering rest, higher health, social enjoyment, religious privileges, peace of conscience, and hopes of heaven.

But even were Sabbath day labor as productive as some suppose, it is still far more than balanced by the extra taxation which vice and irreligion never

fail to impose. Before we exult, therefore, in our gain, let us estimate the additional expense of sickness and premature mortality, of quarrels and law-suits produced by irreligion, of the idleness, improvidence, and wasteful prodigality which attend national dissoluteness, and how then will the balance stand? All these sacrilegious earnings will be consumed, besides double their amount of honest gain. In no way can the nation be impoverished so certainly, as by that extended annihilation of moral principle, which cannot fail to keep pace with the profanation of the Sabbath.

I have heard, in this land of freedom, the movements of the nation to rescue the Sabbath ascribed to priesthood! But is it such a crime to be a minister of Christ, as creates presumptive evidence of guile, when he performs a professional duty? Who is bound to watch and sound the alarm, if not the watchmen of Zion? Or is the Sabbath such a remnant of papal superstition, that he must needs be an ambitious hypocrite, who excites his countrymen to care for and preserve it? Is religion high-treason? Are ministers disfranchised? Are we not citizens, and blessed with equal rights? And have we not families upon whose neck must come the yoke of that despotism, which vice and irreligion never fail to create? But it is not ministers alone that have awakened the solicitude which pervades the nation, and which extends and deepens, every month, and day, and hour. This is an intelligent nation, and to some extent a religious nation; and thousands of Christian patriots appreciate the civil blessings of the Sabbath, and perceive the certain destruction of our republican institutions which must follow its extended and general profanation. It is the sober, reflecting, judicious, pious part of the nation, that sees and thinks, and feels and petitions.

But it is said, that Congress have no right to legislate for religion. It is true, and let God be praised that there is at length one nation under heaven, one mighty nation, where church and state are not united, and where reason and conscience are free. But the petitions are, not that Congress will do any thing *for* religion, but, simply, that by legislation they will do nothing *against* religion—simply that *they will not, with the people's money, hire their twenty-six thousand Mail-carriers, Post-masters and assistants, to unite with the wicked in prostrating the holy Sabbath!* We ask for no union of church and state: but, simply, that the moral influence of the Sabbath may not be thus bartered away for secular gain.

But again, it is said, that no man is obliged to imitate the example of those who violate the Sabbath, and why should not those who choose to keep it mind their own concerns, and let their neighbors alone? We might, if it were benevolent to see our neighbors perish without an effort to save them, and if the conduct of our neighbors affected in no respect our civil and religious rights, by impairing the restraining influence of the government of God. But every Sabbath-breaker, in addition to the ruin he brings on himself, is impairing the moral principle of the community in which I live, and the obligation of an oath; and of course impairs the security of my life, and property, and character, and multiplies temptation around my family—increasing the difficulties of a virtuous education, and the chances of destruction to my children; and by augmenting the power of licentiousness, and impairing that of moral principle, he is preparing to rob my children of the birth-right of liberty, and to bring upon them the yoke of a grievous bondage;—and is all this nothing to me?

Besides, the act of the government is to a certain extent my own act : my suffrage, and the taxes I pay, all go in support of a national act of Sabbath-day violation. And why shall my rights of conscience be thus sported with, for purposes of secular convenience or gain, to that small portion of the nation, who think that they are benefited by a Sabbath mail ?

It is, however, more than intimated that the petitioners for the preservation of the Sabbath, are influenced by superstitious scruples of conscience, unworthy the consideration of the enlightened and liberal-minded legislators of a great nation. Has religion, then, become foolishness, and conscience a thing to be despised, and exiled from the Republic ? Are the Sabbath and the fear of the Lord remnants of papal superstition ? Are the men who have too much conscience to encroach on sacred time, to be of necessity excluded from an important trust, as they must be if Sabbath mails are continued ? Must the commercial interests of the nation be intrusted to those who can eulogize, and still, with pliant conscience, systematically profane the Sabbath, from motives of personal gain ? Once it was, that a want of the fear of God, in courts, occasioned the predominance of temptation, and the multiplication of crimes ; but this it seems is an era of peculiar light, in which conscientious scruples are to be regarded as despicable .

But even could we for a season prosper without the Sabbath, is it possible to shake off our allegiance to God, or to evade the retributions of his righteous providence ? Who wields the orb of day ? Who guides the seasons ? Who sends adversity, and measures out prosperity ? Have we so soon forgotten the weakness of our infancy, and our cries to God, when men rose up against us ? Have we reached an eminence from which God cannot thrust us down ? Can we dispense with his protection, and set at naught his institutions, and run successfully the race of an irreligious prosperity ? Be not deceived. What fleets and armies could not do, the hand of suicide may accomplish, emancipated from divine restraint. Proud and fearless of Heaven as we may be, in one hour our destruction may come. The decree is universal—" *The nation and kingdom that will not serve Thee, shall perish.*" And God has not departed from the helm of universal government, or put beyond his power the instruments of punishment. In our country's bosom lie the materials of ruin, which wait only the divine permission to burst forth in terrific eruption, scattering far and wide the fragments of our greatness.

Give up the Sabbath—blot out that orb of day—suspend its blessed attractions—and the reign of chaos and old night would return. The waves of our unquiet sea, high as our mountains, would roll and dash, from west to east, and east to west, from south to north, and north to south, shipwrecking the hopes of patriots and the world.

Who, then, is the patriot that would thrust out our ship from her peaceful moorings, in a starless night, upon such an ocean of storms, without rudder, or anchor, or compass, or chart ? The elements around us may remain, and our giant rivers and mountains. Our miserable descendants, also, may multiply, and vegetate, and rot in moral darkness and putrefaction. But the American character, and our glorious institutions, will go down into the same grave that entombs the Sabbath ; and our epitaph will stand forth a warning to the world—**THUS ENDETH THE NATION THAT DESPISED THE LORD, AND GLORIED IN WISDOM, WEALTH, AND POWER.**